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cancer

Any disorder of cell growth that results in invasion and destruction of surrounding healthy tissue by abnormal cells. Cancer cells arise from normal cells whose nature is permanently changed. They multiply more rapidly than healthy body cells and do not seem subject to normal control by hormones. They may spread via the bloodstream or lymphatic system to other parts of the body, where they produce further tissue damage (metastases). **Malignant tumour** is another term for cancer. A cancer that arises in epithelium is called a **carcinoma**; one that arises in connective tissue is called a **sarcoma**. **Leukaemia** is cancer of white blood cells; **lymphoma** is cancer of **lymphoid tissue**; and **myeloma** is cancer of **plasma cells** of the bone marrow. Causative agents (carcinogens) include various chemicals (including those in tobacco smoke), ionizing radiation, silica and asbestos particles, and **oncogenic viruses**. Hereditary factors and stress may also play a role.

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